

## **Riding Populist Storms: Brexit, Trumpism and beyond, Special Paper Series Editorial**

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### **Abstract**

In this editorial we aim to introduce the diverse set of 21 papers we have curated over the past two years, to review their collective contribution to the knowledge base in CMS and organisation studies, and to reflect on how they add to and challenge existing debates within our field. These papers speak about populism in a wide range of voices from multiple perspectives. The geographical reach is wide with populism discussed in relation to the contexts of France, India, and Latin America, the UK and the US and authors by working in Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sweden, the Netherlands, the UK and the US. The papers cross disciplinary and theoretical boundaries drawing on political science, history, sociology, psychoanalysis and philosophy. Methodological approaches include ethnography, historical narrative, discursive approaches and autoethnography. As such these papers raise important questions and offer perspectives and ways forward that are in urgent need of attention and discussion by critical management and organisation studies communities, challenging readers' understandings of populism at macro, meso and micro levels of analysis. Here we tie the whole series together by highlighting emergent themes and identifying future research directions that these papers have opened up.

### **Introduction**

Editing this special paper series has been a deeply personal and affective endeavour. The initial impetus arose when, as UK-based academics, we were left stunned and confused by the process, outcome, and aftermath of the June 2016 referendum on whether the UK stays or leaves the European Union. The decision to leave was not what we expected or desired. We struggled with our own personal concerns regarding our families' future mobility, study, employment choices and economic stability. We worried about the nature of the society we were living in, having witnessed, following the referendum, overt acts of racism and self-congratulatory xenophobia of leave supporters in public

places. We were deeply saddened to see some European colleagues preparing to leave the country and others suffering sleepless nights. We saw talented students decide against doctoral studies in the UK and other students reporting overt acts of racism outside their universities. We wondered how withdrawal of lucrative research funding streams and falling international student numbers would affect universities' long-term economic stability. We were concerned by the backlash against 'experts' and the impact this would have on the role and standing of academics tasked with having 'impact' on our society, organisations and communities.

As Critical Management Studies (CMS) scholars we recognised that these personal and professional reflections came from a place of relative privilege and as such we were conflicted and uncomfortable about articulating our fears about the adverse personal, professional and societal impacts of Brexit. On the one hand, we wanted to understand the reasons for the referendum result, which was attributed, at least in part, to the effects of austerity and economic decline on those less privileged than ourselves, and whose causes, as CMS scholars, we would normally champion against the excesses of advanced neoliberalism. At the same time, Brexit, as the then prime minister, David Cameron, predicted (Olivier, 2017), unleashed many demons latent in British society, including those of racism and xenophobia. It was perhaps due to these tensions and paradoxes relating to the causes and consequences of Brexit that the Critical Management discussion list (@JISCMail.AC.UK) stayed silent for several weeks after the referendum. It may have also been that, as the membership of this list extends well beyond the UK, what for us had become a centre of gravity that consumed our waking thoughts was of much less importance and more of a passing curiosity for other CMS scholars.

However, with the election of Donald Trump as the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, the focus shifted away from Brexit per se to the much wider unfolding phenomenon of right wing or 'heritage' (Reyne, 2016) populism in many parts of the world. The need to understand and conceptualise such phenomena using tools and skills at our disposal – or tools and skills that we might need to develop – then became all the more acute. It was in this context that we approached the then *Organization* editors, Craig Pritchard and Yvonne Benschop, with a proposal to edit a Special Issue or at least write a Speaking Out piece on these issues. In response, they asked us to do both, and more: a Speaking Out paper on Brexit and its consequences, and a Special Series of Speaking Out papers focusing more broadly on populism and organisations, so allowing for more space and more voices than a traditional Special Issue to lead provocative and polemic discussions on the multiple manifestations and challenges of populism and its effects.

Through our research and reflections on Brexit as a populist event we became aware of the complexities of defining populism and studying it through the lenses of CMS. Turning attention to our

own community, we called for contributions that critically examined the rising populist phenomenon as a protest against neoliberal globalisation, market fundamentalism and austerity, and the role of CMS in this context. We were interested in papers that discussed how, as an academic community that studies and questions many of the root causes and issues raised and unleashed by populism, the CMS community might be able put its weight behind efforts to critically study the organisation of populist victories such as Brexit and Trump, their impact on organisations and the role of organisations in such events. We also invited authors to critically consider our own role as researchers, educators, intellectuals and activists in fostering constructive debate, challenging deep underlying racism, class, regional and other tensions, and dissipating the damaging effects and consequences of populism.

We were grateful for the advantages of editing a series and not being limited by the physical constraints of a single journal issue when we received almost 30 responses to our call. Nevertheless, curating (Bell and Bridgman 2019) these papers through the review process presented a considerable challenge, due not only to volume but also to their disciplinary diversity and provocative nature. The latter is a key part of the remit of the Speaking Out format, designed to challenge the readership of *Organization*, and this was further exacerbated by the highly emotive and controversial topics of Brexit, Trumpism and populism. For example, there were controversies in the review process around the use of the term ‘Trumpism’, which, some reviewers felt, potentially further inflated the grandiosity of the man, around the suitability of the political subject matter for the journal and the field, around authors’ own positionalities e.g. in relation to Brexit as leave or remain supporters, around authors making arguments that were potentially damaging to the CMS project, and around the less ‘scientific’ nature of the ‘Speaking Out’ format. This affected authors, reviewers and us as guest editors, making it hard at times to differentiate between personal perspectives and intellectual positions, and establish a workable, transparent relationship between these two aspects. Twenty-one papers have made it through this challenging process to publication (including our own, which was managed separately through the review by Craig Prichard).<sup>1</sup> Seven of the papers have already been published in the ‘Speaking Out’ sections of *Organization’s* Volumes 25 (2018) and 26 (2019). The remaining 14 papers are published in this current concentrated special issue (March 2020).

### **The papers: contributions and provocations**

Our task now is to introduce the wonderfully diverse set of 21 papers we have curated over the past two years, to review their collective contribution to the knowledge base in CMS and organisation studies, and to reflect on how they add to and challenge debates pertaining to the very nature and future of our field and academia more broadly. The published papers speak in a wide range of voices from multiple perspectives. Firstly, the geographical reach goes far beyond the primary sites of (UK)

Brexit and (US) Trumpism, with populism also discussed in relation to the contexts of France, India, and Latin America, and authors working in Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sweden and The Netherlands, as well as UK and USA. Secondly, disciplinary and theoretical approaches go beyond organisation and management studies to political science (drawing on Laclau, Mouffe, and Weffort), history, sociology (Bourdieu, Weber), psychoanalysis (Klein), philosophy (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dussel, Jameson). Methodological approaches advocated include ethnography, historical narrative, discursive approaches and autoethnography. It was our principle in guest-editing the series to include papers that framed and developed the emerging debates in insightful and thought-provoking ways no matter what 'sides' they took in those debates. This means that whilst we do not necessarily agree with all the conclusions reached by the authors in the series, we do think that they raise important questions and offer perspectives and ways forward that are in urgent need of attention and discussion by critical management and organisation studies communities.

Whilst the papers thus 'Speak Out' in their individual ways, together they make key contributions beyond the sum of their 21 parts in challenging and shaping readers' understandings at macro, meso and micro levels of analysis. Our intention in this editorial is to tie the whole series together through highlighting emergent themes and identifying conversations that these papers have opened up, which we hope to see picked up and developed in future publications. We now proceed to very briefly summarise these contributions by introducing the papers in each of the following three (overlapping) groups. We start with Group 1, which mainly contributes to critical macro-analyses of populism, Brexit, Trumpism, and beyond. Group 2 then focuses on the (meso level) role of CMS and academia in populist times. Finally, Group 3 challenges readers to think about the (micro-level) role of individual academic's emotions and activism.

*Group 1: critical analyses of populism, Brexit, Trumpism, and beyond*

Some of the key concerns shared by the nine papers in this group include the nature of populism, whether populist phenomena should be seen as positive, negative, or neutral in terms of their ideology and impact, and therefore how populism should be approached by critical management and organisation researchers. These issues are central to one of the first papers published in the series: De Cleen, Glynos and Mondon (2018), who draw on the work of Laclau to constructively propose nine rules of critical and analytically-sharp, self-reflexive engagement with populism and related phenomena in CMS and beyond. They suggest in particular that: 1) populism is a concept *and* a signifier; 2) it is political and has a logic; 3) there are many things that it is not; 4) populist politics are not reducible to populist reason and populist elements are always articulated with non-populist

elements; and 5) populism is not a priori either good or bad but needs to be evaluated in context. They also argue that we should analyse and reflect on: 6) discourses *about* 'populism' and their performative effects; 7) anti-populism as a political logic; 8) populist hype and its effects; and 9) academic discourse about populism.

In the second paper in this group, Hensmans and van Bommel (2020) are also influenced by Laclau but also by Mouffe and take a less neutral view of populism, arguing in fact that mature political democracies require an antagonistic form of populism in order to function. Drawing on the case of Brexit, the authors call on management scholars to focus on how popular resentment can be used (instead) as a force for good. They suggest two ways this can be done: firstly by contributing to an alternative, emotionally-founded discourse about England, the European Union and a new popular civilisation project that could bind them, and secondly, by inducing the creation of collective moral categories embraced across the elite/non elite divide in the image of the post-World War II UK National Health Service.

In the third Group 1 paper, Miscoczkzy (2020) also reminds us of the capacity of populism to act as a positive force by discussing it within the Latin American context from which, she suggests, the Global North West could learn a lot. She argues that the stigma currently associated with populism may contaminate the notions of people and popular struggles that are so relevant in the Latin American political and organisational context. She also contends that the organisational processes within popular movements and struggles cannot be comprehensively studied without fully appreciating the knowledge theoretically elaborated in, and that emerges from, below. Miscoczkzy claims that Dussel's philosophy and ethics of liberation provide possibilities for negative critique of populism as the political expression of fetishized vertical power. The fourth paper is by Masood and Nisar (2020), who share a concern with Miscoczkzy that much work of populism focuses on 'the assumption that the 'normal' Global North West is becoming 'abnormal''. This paper uses the rise of the Bharatiya Janta party in India to demonstrate that much could be learnt from South East Asian populism, particularly regarding their intersections with business and government. They argue that a comprehensive analysis of far-right populism must account for and pay attention to the heterogeneities of these movements across the Global North West and Global South East.

Barros and Wanderley (2020) continue the themes of geographical and historical contextualisation in the fifth Group 1 paper by advocating the need to take Brazilian past history into account in understanding its and other present-day populist challenges. Drawing on Weffort's conceptualization of populism, they discuss the role of business movements in supporting and taking control of the political agenda through think tanks. They draw a parallel between the role played by the think tank

IPES in 1960s and contemporary populist events in Brazil in the election of Jair Bolsonaro. They see the latter, Trumpism and Brexit as examples of a powerful free market ideology project wrapped up in a populist discourse. The authors urge CMS scholars to engage with the socio-economic conditions that give birth to populist movements as a way of challenging neoliberal hegemony and anti-democratic populist solutions.

The next two papers in this group focus on Trumpism. Mollan and Geesin (2020) use a historical narrative to interpret Trumpism's emerging ideology. They identify key themes which arise from a critical interpretation of Trump's business career before becoming a celebrity on the TV show 'The Apprentice', which portrayed him as a decisive and successful business leader. The article critically explores how Trump's approach to business was combined with previously marginal right-wing conservative ideas, to project Trump as both critic and promised solution to bleak and troubling perceptions of American politics, economy and society. Gills, Patomaki and Morgan (2019) use the concept of 'status dysfunction' to demonstrate how Trump has failed to place himself in a position to be competent and does not conform to the role of the president, which is important in the context of US political culture and institutions. They argue he is simultaneously a product of processes such as globalization, financialization, deindustrialization and rising inequalities, and a vocal protest against their effects on the everyday lives of people. The authors conclude therefore that his removal from office would not resolve the underlying and long-standing problems that caused him to be elected.

Fougère and Barthold's (2020) article puts forward the case that populism is a phenomenon that does not only characterize extremist figures. Drawing on Laclau's conceptualization of populism, the authors show how in 2017 the now French President, Emmanuel Macron, developed a form of anti-extreme electoral populism relying upon the creation of a new political frontier between 'progressive reformers' and 'backward-looking conservatives', and upon a number of key empty signifiers, used in his campaign, such as 'Revolution', '(The Republic) onwards' and 'and at the same time'. They argue that Macron's electoral populism successfully exploited the middle space left vacant by all other candidates, relied on its own anti-establishment discourse, and in so doing succeeded in unifying disparate demands.

The last paper in this group, by Gustafsson and Weinryb (2020), turns to the role of social media in the context of populism, arguing that one type of social media activism, 'connective action', has affinities with populism and may have detrimental consequences for democratic processes. Drawing on Weber and using the concept of 'individualized charismatic authority' as an 'unpredictable and populist phenomenon', the authors trace the normative allure of individualised digital engagement to the libertarian roots of techno-utopianism and argue that this, combined with 'digital enthusiasm'

generated on social platforms and entailing self-infatuation, has potentially dire democratic and organisational consequences. They argue that digital enthusiasm does not merely provide democratic opportunities for protest but that the fickleness of the individualised charismatic authority it generates may put civil society and the established benefits of democratic procedures at risk.

Taken overall, this first group of papers raises important questions about what populism is, what it is not and what it could be. Whilst its reach makes it tempting to see populism as a global phenomenon, the authors of these papers speak out about the importance of studying populism as historically and geographically specific, with noticeable parallels between times and places but also crucial differences that can shape the nature of populism as more or less positive or negative political, societal and organisational force. The papers in this group show how populism manifests differently due to differing local conditions and history, and several authors critique the current focus on populism in the Global North West, making the point that more could be learnt about populism by paying attention to its manifestations in the Global South. We see that populism is a hard to define and constantly shifting phenomenon. Taking critical management and organisation perspectives and using their analytical lenses as well as those drawn primarily from political science, philosophy and sociology, this group of papers provides insight into both the organising of populism and its links with business. Several papers also urge CMS and organisation scholars to engage more with the underlying causes of populist events. The next group of papers picks up more on the two latter themes.

#### *Group 2: the role of CMS and academia in populist times*

The eight papers in this group explore the implications of populism for the role and future of CMS, business schools, and teaching and learning in management and organisation studies. The papers vary in their degrees of pessimism and optimism, and offer a variety of ways forward, ranging from a rethinking of theories and practices to more radical and utopian solutions.

In the first paper in Group 2, Grey (2018) poses the question, 'does Brexit mean the end for Critical Management Studies in Britain?' He argues that, as a generally anti-Brexit community, CMS has found itself on the same side as big business and mainstream management, making it hard to sustain itself as something separate from these. Grey suggests that, if British CMS is to work effectively against Brexit, it will have to join forces with the 'establishment elite', which would effectively spell the end of CMS in Britain. He concludes with a hope that 'maybe British CMS academics and activists will find new and creative ways to articulate CMS in the post-Brexit landscape'. Grey thereby throws down a gauntlet that is picked up directly and indirectly by several of the following authors. In a similar vein, Lopdrup-Hjorth and du Gay (2019) provocatively suggest that, despite distinctive normative and political differences, CMS scholars use a vocabulary that in some respects resembles those adopted

by right-wing populists, particularly as regards their profoundly antithetical stance toward bureaucracy and the state. Lopdrup-Hjorth and du Gay explore the use of this vocabulary by both CMS scholars and right-wing populists and discuss the lack of critical potential it has at present. They advocate renewed consideration and reflexivity concerning the potential merits of bureaucracy and the state but also on how to conduct critique in populist times.

In the third paper in Group 2, Parker and Racz (2020) are also concerned with the efficacy of CMS critique in the era of Brexit, Trump and post-truth politics, but take a different angle from Lopdrup-Hjorth and du Gay (2018) on the preferred way forward. Drawing on examples of 'post-truth communities', for instance the 'Flat Earth Society', they caution that CMS should be wary of falling back onto rational, logical and potentially elitist platforms of critique and instead argue for more *agonistic* forms of critique to develop affective relations with communities alongside the discussion of facts, ethics and politics. Vine's (2020) essay (the fourth Group 2 paper) blames the limits of CMS critique on the propensity of CMS scholars to indulge in linear thinking, which, Vine contends, reflects their/our epistemological and political biases. Vine suggests that CMS should reflect on the complexities of Brexit and Trumpism in order to dislodge itself from its ideological biases, pay greater attention to nonlinear logic, including the pedagogical potential of paradox, actively engage across disciplinary boundaries, and breathe new life into ethnographic studies to better understand factors which contributed to Brexit and Trump's election.

The fifth Group 2 paper (Bristow and Robinson, 2018) is our own. It is less pessimistic than Grey (2018), less critical of CMS than Lopdrup-Hjorth and du Gay (2019), Parker and Racz (2020) and Vine (2020), and is more a call to arms for our community, as we consider the intellectual tools available to CMS scholars in rising to the challenges of Brexit and post-Brexit times. We examine the key CMS positions of anti-performativity, critical performativity, political performativity and public CMS in this context, and suggest that contributing positively in these times requires a new public CMS. This would be guided by the premise that we have no greater and no lesser right than anyone else to shape the world; entail as much critical reflexivity in relation to our unintended performativities as our intended ones; and be underpinned by marginalism as a critical political project. In the sixth Group 2 paper, De Cock, Just and Husted (2018) are also more optimistic. They contribute to the conversation by inviting us to think about how the phenomenon of Trump could be seen as an opportunity for developing our scholarly thinking through activating Fredric Jameson's 'utopian imagination'. They argue that following this dialectical approach enables us to see 'the traumatic event of Trump's election as providing a form and space through which contradictions that have been firmly locked into place in our socioeconomic set-up over the past few decades have become much more malleable'.



The remaining two papers in this group turn the focus specifically on (critical) management education and curriculum. Boussebaa (2020) scrutinizes the 'Global Britain' project sponsored by the British government and the role that business schools might play in it. He argues that this project is bound up with British imperialism, displays 'postcolonial melancholia' (Gilroy 2004) and that, whilst business schools are notionally anti-Brexit, they are complicit in the 'Global Britain' project by propagating elements of its imperialist discourse. He helps us to reflect on our own role (as critical educators) in challenging the enduring relationship between imperialism and management education. Continuing the critique of the business school curriculum, the last paper in Group 2 is by Spector and Wilson (2018), who use the lens of transformational leadership to examine the phenomenon of Trump's presidency. They claim that by favouring an appeal to the emotions over a rational exchange of positions, by assuming the superiority of one set of values over others, by denying the validity of differing and/or conflicting interests, by asserting authority based on conflicting interests and hierarchical position rather than informed choice or consent, transformational leadership veers closely to our understanding of demagogues. They claim that leadership scholars must accept a degree of responsibility in order to advance alternatives not only to Trump but also to the problematic assumptions embedded in leadership thought.

Taken together, this second group of papers asks us to rethink what it means to be critical management scholars and critical educators in this current age. The papers in this group challenge us to consider the need to interrogate assumptions embedded in the theories we use and the context and content of what we teach, and to re-evaluate the overall suitability of the business school curriculum and of the broader intellectual arsenal available to us as critical scholars. The papers also invite us to think of the need for new kinds of CMS public engagement beyond our comfort zones and established external collaborators, and as such call for action and more engaged scholarship. In spite or maybe because of the storms of populism, they help us to reflect on the future direction of (the) CMS project(s) and imagine its potential contributions to better and perhaps even utopian futures.

*Group 3: the role of individuals as CMS scholars and academics – affective performativity, academics' emotions and activism*

From the meso level of CMS, business schools and academia, we now move to a third group, in which four papers focus more on the micro-level feelings, roles and actions of individuals and groups of CMS scholars/activists. The first in this group, Kerr and Śliwa's (2020) essay suggests how management and organisation studies scholars might approach 'org-studying' Brexit. They are clear on their own positionality and highlight the salience of emotions as regards Brexit and, in particular, resentment in relation to populism as a political methodology. They note the importance of studying how

professional and personal identities are being reconstructed in the UK in the light of the Brexit vote and reflect on the way the latter continues to challenge their own established identities. Drawing on the works of Bourdieu and Sapiro on the 'transposition of crisis', they put forward suggestions as to how management and organisation scholars might develop an overarching multi-layered approach to researching the organisational consequences of Brexit.

Continuing the theme of personal reflection and involvement, Callahan and Elliott (2020) discuss their experience of engaging in an academic activist event that failed. Reflecting on a collective response to Trump's populism and employing the concepts of 'fantasy spaces' and 'emotional derailment', their analysis leads them to address 'three orthodoxies'. These are that: a) diatribes decrying the awfulness of Trump and his administration cronies create fantasy spaces that might feel good but are actually counterproductive, b) academia is itself a site for activism which has far-reaching implications, and c) hiding failure is a form of collaboration with performativity. They contend that lessons from their experiences of failure could serve to re-invigorate possibilities for academic activism through challenging success story narratives and by foregrounding vulnerability. In the third Group 3 paper, Bell and de Gama (2018) also reflect on their own personal experience as CMS scholars, in this case, when confronted with the expectation that they, as the then Chairs of the Academy of Management (AOM) CMS Division, remain value-neutral in relation to the US travel ban imposed by Trump in January 2017. They explore how the concept of 'taking a stand' was used by AOM leadership to silence politics and draw attention to the impossibility of separating management scholarship from questions of ethics and politics. Using Ashcraft's notion of 'inhabited criticism' they highlight the gendered nature of struggles to be critical in uncritical spaces and draw attention to the importance of embodied, enacted and emplaced work as the basis for developing relational practices of critique.

Finally, focusing on micro-level relationships within the CMS community, Ulus's paper (2020) works with a psychoanalytical perspective to scrutinize our organising processes as critical academics – namely the unconscious dynamics of responding to the US-based social crisis surrounding Trump's election and presidency. She argues that it is not possible to organise effectively against the effects of right-wing populism without commitment to confronting academics' individual and collective othering and defensive processes. Using the concepts of 'othering' and 'splitting', she analyses personally witnessed examples of the splitting off of the United States as the 'bad' Other. Ulus contends that undertaking emotional work on our own academic identities in order to move away from the defence of splitting will support listening to affected voices and extending – not merely performing – concern and care.

Overall, this group of papers speaks out about the complexities of confronting populism as critical academics by providing examples of the challenges and possibilities of engaged scholarship, intellectual activism (Contu, 2017), and reflexivity. These papers demonstrate feminist attention to the authors' positionality and emotions. We term this an 'affective performativity' – a form of CMS performativity that within this current 'emotional Zeitgeist' (Kerr and Śliwa, 2019) adds to the arsenal of (CMS) performativities discussed in our own contribution to this series (Bristow and Robinson, 2018). The papers draw attention to the relationships and intersections between the personal and professional lives of CMS scholars, which, as highlighted in our introduction to this editorial, these populist times bring into sharp focus. We agree with the authors in this group that paying more attention to our own emotive and embodied reactions in these highly complex and paradoxical times, and finding appropriate conceptual and reflexive tools to engage in a (more) holistic scholarship, has to be an important component of the CMS project moving forward.

### **Riding populist storms**

We have opened this editorial by describing the process of editing the special paper series as a deeply personal and emotive endeavour. It has been a lengthy undertaking full of challenges as we shepherded a large and highly diverse set of provocative papers on controversial issues through the review process. It has also been highly rewarding. Almost three years since we called for papers and nearly four years since the UK EU Referendum, Brexit, Trumpism, and populism are still powerful and passionately contested forces behind political, economic and organisational turbulence in many parts of the world. Questions, problems and emotions that have first given rise to the series are still highly pertinent and in urgent need of being addressed, with new issues arising as new populist events continue to violently shake and reshape societies. At times, it feels like we are riding a never-ending populist storm, battered by winds and waves of change whilst dangers threaten to rise at any moment from dark churning waters. Yet now we face this weather front with perhaps more hope and understanding. The 21 papers in the series constitute a knowledge base that can help us become more informed seafarers, to whom populism no longer appears as one unstoppable hurricane destroying everything in its path but rather as a network or interrelated but different, complex weather-systems, some of which even potentially allied with the direction in which we may wish CMS and organisational scholarship to travel.

So, more specifically, what can we learn from the series about riding populist storms? In proposing the paper series, our first aim was to find ways to critically study the organisation of populist victories such as Brexit and Trumpism, their impact on organisations, and the role of organisations in such events. We feel that many papers talk to this aim, drawing on a wide interdisciplinary range of

theoretical approaches, concepts and methodologies. The importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between political science and critical management studies has been highlighted as an important priority, especially in terms of studying the organisation of populist movements, looking at political parties as organisations and exploring the relationship between populist movements and business. The contributions grounded in political science, history, sociology and psychoanalysis also bring promising avenues and conceptual lenses to the study of populism and its consequences for our own and other institutions and organisations. In addition, some papers also draw our attention to revising, further critiquing, and in some cases rehabilitating concepts from our own (wide) discipline (for example, the role of bureaucracy and the state, and the study of paradox) and putting them to work in terms of our 'org-studying' populism and its effects. Other papers, particularly but not exclusively those from the Global South, encourage us to revisit and reframe what is meant by populism and draw our attention to a sustained history of populism in some parts of the world. Overall, the papers in the series underscore the importance of always contextualising populist movements and victories, challenge us to carefully consider the complexities of their specific socio-material organisational entanglements, and warn us against seeing them in simplistic positive or negative terms in relation to their societal and organisational impact.

Our aim was, second, to critically consider our role as researchers, educators and intellectuals in fostering constructive debate, challenging deep underlying racism, class, regional and other tensions, and dissipating the damaging effects and consequences of populism. This has provoked lively debate as to the nature and future of CMS, the nature of its scholarship and its contribution to society. Implied in many of these papers is a feeling, with which we agree, that CMS should make a more concerted effort to engage with marginalised groups and to discuss and articulate its own privilege. CMS should much more fully embody the collective intellectual and activist power of, *inter alia*, feminist, postcolonial, decolonial, critical race and critical whiteness theories, which up to now remain somewhat sidelined in our field. Papers in this series explore possibilities of academic or intellectual activism and a more engaged/affective scholarship. However, issues of race, class and intersectionality are left largely untouched, and we would encourage work which examines these aspects in more detail as an important part of the inclusivity agenda for CMS. Papers in this series also challenge us as critical educators to apply critical scrutiny to business schools for imperialist undertones and the reproduction of more worrying populist tendencies. This is a good start; however, we would also be interested in seeing papers that explore how the curriculum can challenge and address some of the other deep-seated structural issues which have led to populist reactions and the 'demons' unleashed by them.

In summary, this collection of 21 *Speaking Out* papers is both polemic and provocative: it speaks out about the effects, challenges, and possibilities of populism at macro, meso and micro levels and how

critical management and organisation scholars can study and engage with different manifestations of populism. The papers help us rethink what populism is and isn't and what it could be. They provoke us to learn from all contexts where populism, widely defined, occurs and to reflect on its contextual nature. They set off polemics about the future of CMS and management education and challenge us to think about our own individual embodied engagement, our vulnerabilities and failures in the light of the effects of and reactions to populism. We hope you enjoy these papers. We encourage you to engage with the problems and provocations they address and invite you to add to the debates this series has started within the CMS community and beyond.

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